

The Rejuvenation of Bellamy Grist.

BY EDGAR JEPSON.

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Editorial Note—Dr. Simon Flexner, the famous New York pathologist, declares it is possible to transplant and successfully graft on man the vital organs of lower animals. His announcement has startled the scientific world. What will surgery do next? Mr. Jepson here tells the story of a man and a monkey who exchange hearts by means of a surgical operation with highly amusing consequences.

THE operation was over, and it had been successful; Bellamy Grist's new heart was beating steadily. I went to the window called down to the reporters "Success!" and watched them dash into the temporary telegraph office on the other side of the road, to send the glad tidings to the anxious, waiting cities of the country that a new lease of life had been granted to America's noblest son, and the golden stream of his poetry would still flow. Then I breathed long and deeply and came back to the operating tables. My work was done; Glaisher and Tobin were putting the final touches to it; and I had leisure to look from the massive face of Bellamy Grist, pillowed in its leonine mane of snow-white hair, to the black, chinless, browless face of Moko the big chimpanzee whose heart now beat in the poet's body.

As I looked, to my surprise the chimpanzee's ears twitched. He should have been dead an hour. In dismay I looked for Bellamy Grist's heart, the heart which was to be embalmed and deposited in the Pantheon, where should rest the relics of America's great dead. The very movement to build the Pantheon had been set on foot by Bellamy Grist's admirers, who could not endure that his splendid heart should lack a proper resting place; and now that idiot O'Driscoll, with his senseless love of practical joking, had replaced Moko's heart with it. What a fool I had been, brilliant surgeon as he was, to let him take part in the operation! He had, with Bekker's help taken out Moko's heart for me, and while I was absorbed in fixing it in Bellamy Grist, had put the poet's heart in its place.

"O'Driscoll, where's Bellamy Grist's heart?" I said sharply.

He turned from the window from which he was watching with Bekker the struggle of the reporters, and said, "Sure, it's in Moko. Exchange is no robbery, Hickman, me boy. And I'm thinking, too, that it's enjoying the new rich blood that it's pumping."

"But, confound you, what about the Pantheon?" I cried.

"It can go there later when the monkey dies, if it's built so soon. Science needed the converse of the operation," he said seriously enough.

That was true; and to the interests of science everything must give way: "Very well," I said firmly. "In that case you will take charge of Moko yourself."

"I'll do that," he said.

Glaisher came across the room and shook my hand, saying, "Hickman R. Shafer, I congratulate you; in the name of American surgery I congratulate you. It was magnificent!"

"Congratulations Chicago, rather," I said. "My masters, Guthrie and Carrell, invented the operation. I'm only their pupil."

"You did it twenty minutes quicker than either Guthrie or Carrell. I've seen them," said O'Driscoll.

"That's so," said Tobin; and he and Bekker also shook hands with me and congratulated me.

I made another examination of Bellamy Grist; and we moved him into his bedroom. Then I went down stairs to my wife, Bellamy Grist's daughter. Her face lighted up at the sight of me, and she stepped hastily forward, kissed me on the brow, and said in a choked voice, "Oh, Hickman, my glorious Hickman, you have given me back a father! But more—oh, far more—you have given back to the greatest of the nations its noblest son!"

"That's so, little girl. If all goes well," I said. "It will! I feel it will! And oh, how doubly blessed am I to be the daughter of a genius and the wife of a genius! You will be world-famous!"

"Yes, Editha; I guess American surgery will go up one," I said.

She blinked; and I thought that, as often, it was at the idiomatic phrase; but then she sighed and said, "If only it had not been a monkey's heart in my splendid father."

I have always recognized that she is the high-souled, ethereal daughter of a poet, and I said soothingly, "Well, it was a choice of evils. And after all a heart is only a muscle; it's not like a brain; it can't do him any harm."

"No, no; of course not. Still I can't help feeling it. If only it could have been the heart of some brave, simple young Westerner!" she said, clasping her hands.

"No young Westerner applied," I said. "And if one had the law might have kicked up a fuss. But I must get back to your father."

I kissed her and went upstairs; I was thankful that she had not spoken of her father's old heart. I wanted time to think over breaking the truth about it to her.

For some days she was busy with the sacks of congratulatory letters and telegrams brought to the house by the postal wagons, and cutting out and pasting into large volumes the eulogiums of the Press on Bellamy Grist and myself. O'Driscoll smuggled Moko away as soon as he could be moved; and she was not even aware that the chimpanzee was alive. O'Driscoll had bidden me good-bye and taken a few steps toward the depot when he turned and said "Suppose the heart is the seat of the emotions after all, Hickman, me boy?"

"Not on your life, I said."

Bellamy Grist made a wonderful recovery. The powerful heart of Moko drove the blood in full flood through his veins, and every other organ took on a new lease of life. The years seemed to fall off him; and I had the satisfaction of having given to my country probably a score more years of her noblest son's activity. The Press took the closest warmest interest in his recovery; and his first egg, and even more, his first steak, received an extraordinary meed of recognition.

His recovery was helped considerably by his excellent spirits; he was frequently the prey of fits of child-like glee. At first this startled us, since, as every one knows, before the operation, a great seriousness had been the quality in him she cherished the keynotes of Bellamy Grist's character no less than of his work. I soon grew used to it; but Editha did not. She found it hard to adjust herself to this change in her father, since his intense seriousness had been the quality in him she cherished most. One day, indeed, after he had playfully tweaked off his nurse's cap, she came up to me in tears and said, "I have always known, of course, that my father has a wide humanity; but these manifestations of its humorous side, coming so late in life, jar upon me as undignified after his strenuous past. Tell me, Hickman, do you—do you think they are preliminary symptoms of his second childhood?"

I assured her that I had never known an old man less senile than her father.

In other ways, too, he showed this change to youth. His favorite reading had been our serious monthly and quarterly reviews; now he would not look at them himself, nor let Editha read them to him. His taste was all for light literature of the humorous kind, or for records of tropical travel.

I came in one evening towards the end of his convalescence to find that one of our brightest publishers, Richard P. Blick, had been down to see him about his next volume of poems. I was somewhat vexed, for my father-in-law had always been somewhat ineffectual in money matters, and had always made poor bargains with his publishers. It was not likely that he had made a better one on a sick bed. I went upstairs to him, and when I made sure that the visit had not tired him, I said, "So Blick has been down to see you about your next book."

With a grin, which, on anyone else's face I should have called mischievous, he drew a check out of his writing case and handed it to me: it was for fifty thousand dollars!

"Blick talked of fifteen thousand," said Bellamy Grist, and—could I believe my eyes?—he winked. Yes; Bellamy Grist winked!

A few days later he was about again, and we became fully alive to the changes in him. The renewal of his youth, it was indeed almost a renewal of his boyishness, was amazing—sometimes it was very trying. He had been of a distinctly sedentary habit before the operation, spending nearly the whole day in his study. Now he was full of a boyish restlessness, wandering continually from room to room, and spending hours roaming about the woods. Before, he had always been of a grave seriousness; now, he was vivacious; he would even sometimes josh Editha. He began to show a distressing fondness for practical jokes. I observed other changes, too, in his tastes. Before, he had been passionately partial to pie; indeed, I had always believed that pie was chiefly to blame for the failure of his heart; now, he preferred fruit and salads and sweets. In the matter of sweets he was voracious. He seemed to grow more boyish every day.

We were not the only people to notice the changes in him, or indeed, to find them trying. I observed that his admirers, who came by scores to listen to his glorious words, no longer came from their interviews with uplifted, transfigured faces; they looked puzzled and glum. The neighbors, too, before so proud of his dwelling in their midst, now that they sometimes suffered from his practical jokes, began to look at him uneasily. His old

friends, America's greatest thinkers and literateurs, after a while ceased to congratulate us on the wonderful renewal of his youth.

These changes in his character were not accompanied by any diminution in his intellectual force; I thought myself that his intellect had grown, if anything, keener and more discerning. He was not working at his new volume with the old steady industry—I have known him write six hundred lines of poetry in an afternoon—he worked at it fitfully. He had lost interest, too, in the biography, once his pride, which Editha was writing of him. Curiously enough I liked him far more than I had in his serious days, in spite of my being a serious, scientific man myself; we were now much closer friends. I did not, indeed, see so much of him as I had done, for I was often away from home performing the heart-transference operation in every part of the country. Indeed, my services were so much in demand that there was a run on the greater Simians, the price of them had risen sixty per cent, and Rogers, the purveyor to menageries, was forced to fit out two large expeditions to Africa to supply my patients. Our leading financiers, society women, actors, politicians, and divines were getting me to replace their hearts worn out by our strenuous American life.

Thus I was prevented from observing continuously the youthful changes in my father-in-law; and it was nearly five months after the operation that I became seriously uneasy about them. Then a possibility at once so astounding and uncomfortable that I dismissed it at once as an idle fancy, flashed upon me. I was working in my study and Bellamy Grist was walking up and down it with the boyish restlessness now habitual to him. I raised my eyes from my notes and observed that he wore a very absent-minded air, and his lips were moving as if he were engaged in composition. Suddenly as I looked, without any change in his musing face, plainly without any conscious effort of will, he leapt up sideways, caught the curtain rod with his right hand, and came bang down on the floor,



"AFTER ALL, THERE'S THE VEGETARIANS—THEY'RE FOND OF READING."

bringing the snapped rod and the curtain on the top of him; and I had had a flashing, fleeting, but vivid impression of a leaping monkey. Even as he picked himself up, with a very sheepish air, and rubbed his knees, I thrust the fancy from me and assured myself that it was only his wonderful boyishness.

The impression kept recurring; but I thrust it away and refused to let it annoy me. Two days later it was strengthened indeed. I was strolling through the woods with him when he made another of those sudden leaps, caught the lower branch of a tree, swung, gave himself a curious jerk, and dropped in an oddly foolish way on his hands and knees. He looked round with an air of strange surprise, rose, shook his leonine mane of snow-white hair on one side, looked behind him curiously, and said, "I thought I'd got a tail. Dodgast it, Hickman! Why haven't we tails?"

I gasped. Then he laughed a forced laugh and pretended he had been joking. I accepted the pretence; but when I reached home I locked myself in my study and faced the situation. There was no doubt that Bellamy Grist had acquired along with the heart, something of Moko's disposition; with him nothing could be done; but how did I stand to my patients still awaiting the operation? At first it seemed to me that I ought to warn all of them of these new results of it. I took the list of names and dates out of the drawer, to write them; and it pulled me up short. There were two famous divines, a great but honest lawyer, a professor of Harvard, and a leading actor, about whom there could be no doubt; they were servants of the American people, doing good work; they must be told and choose for themselves. On the other hand there were two Wall Street operators, the head of a great, well-watered trust, three leading politicians, and five leaders of society in New York and Chicago. It was plain that the characters of these could not but benefit by the admixture of some natural monkey; and I resolved in their case to preserve a beneficial silence and operate.

For the next few weeks I watched Bellamy Grist closely, and now that my mind was on the right tack, I saw many more signs of the influence of Moko. I came to the conclusion that the influence was merely in his sentiments and emotions; his brain power was as strong as ever. He finished his volume of poems and despatched it to his editor. Editha was hurt, and I think deeply hurt, though she was too high-souled to complain, by the fact that he had not shown her a single poem in it. Before she had been his constant confidante and advisor in matters poetical, and had always striven, for, like Homer, he sometimes nodded, to keep him at his highest level of grave seriousness.

A few days later I suffered another shock. I was walking in our little town with him when a mulatto woman passed us. He gripped my arm and cried, "Good heavens, Hickman! What a beautiful creature! What features!"

It was the Simian type that appealed; and my blood ran cold. I turned and fairly dragged him along homewards.

We had just reached home one day after another walk, and were entering the house, when the sound of hurried footsteps made me pause and turn my head. A dapper little man with a very pale face, carrying a package under his arm, was opening the garden gate.

"Hello, here's Blick," said Bellamy Grist; and I caught a ring of discomfort in his tone.

The publisher skipped up to us in the hall and without a word of greeting cried, "Mr. Grist! What does this mean? What does this mean?"

"What does what mean?" said Bellamy.

"This book—this dreadful book!" cried the publisher.

"What's the matter with the book?" said Bellamy Grist cheerfully; and he opened the door of his study and we all went in.

"The matter! The matter!" cried Blick, slamming the package down on the table and beginning to strip off the wrappings. "We bought a volume of serious poetry from you; and this is humorous! It must be humorous! All our readers think it's humorous!"

"Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch!" said Bellamy Grist. "It's nothing of the kind."

Blick turned over the leaves of the MS. quickly, and cried, "But—but this 'Ode to a Ripe Banana!' And—this poem, 'The Joy of Nuts!' And—and—this one, 'Up a Tree!' And this one—where is it?—here—'Freedom!'—all about freedom from the—from insects!"

"Well, what's the matter with them? They're all right!" said Bellamy Grist tartly.

"But we didn't want this kind of thing! We wanted poetry—serious poetry—the—the noble sort of stuff the American market expects from you."

Bellamy Grist grinned at him, an angry grin that bared his teeth, and said in a rising voice, "Ah, if you'd only told me so, I'd have told you I wasn't writing any more of that trash. Why, I can't read my previous volumes!" He snatched one out of the shelf and banged it down beside the MS. "They're all about nothing at all. But this is all right; this is the real thing. I've always said that poetry should be the expression of genuine emotion; and this new volume is the expression of genuine emotion. Take this 'Ode to a Ripe Banana' and compare it with my 'Ode to a President.' A president is not like that, and nobody ever felt about him like that. But a ripe banana is like this; and I feel about it just like this—every healthy human being must. Besides a ripe banana is a beautiful thing, and a proper subject for poetry; a president is not a beautiful thing and a proper subject for poetry. And this 'Freedom' again—have you ever in the summer been troubled by a flea?"

"What!" screamed Blick above Bellamy Grist's thunderous roar. "Are you seriously defending this dreadful poetry? Have you no care for your splendid reputation—for—for the great success you have had in the American market?"

"Oh, they're all right," said Bellamy Grist.

"They're not all right! And we won't publish this book! It won't sell! You must refund the fifty thousand dollars! We'll bring an action against you to recover it!" howled Blick.

"You make me tired," said Bellamy Grist scornfully. "Go and look at our agreement. I'll bring an action against you if you don't publish it."

The wretched Blick wiped the sweat from his clammy brow, and walked up and down, muttering; then he said bitterly, "Well, we've been done by America's noblest—"

"Say that, and I'll kick you out of the house!" roared Bellamy Grist, advancing on him briskly.

Blick curled up: "No, no, Mr. Grist! I—I—may be wrong! Perhaps I'm not a judge of poetry. It's a new break for the firm. Perhaps you're right. After all there's the vegetarians—they're fond of reading." And he snatched up the MS., backed out of the door and slammed it in the wrathful poet's face.

"It's a new break for me, too," said Bellamy Grist.

I did not dare tell Editha of the character of the new volume any more than I had dared tell her of the effect of Moko's heart on her father's nature. I watched him more closely, trying to observe if that effect was increasing; I fancied that in the matter of a love of mischief it was. Some of his pranks were outrageous, and I found that he was on the best of terms with all the bad boys of the neighborhood. I believed, indeed, that he was the instigator of their bolder fights.

Then came the domestic climax. One morning at breakfast Editha said, "Surely the embalmers are very long fixing up father's heart. They've had it five months."

"The embalmers haven't got it. They can't have it till Moko dies," I said in as matter of fact a tone as I could assume.

"What do you mean?" gasped Editha.

"Well, O'Driscoll replaced Moko's heart by your father's. He felt that science needed the converse of the operation."

"But—but—my father's heart—the splendid heart of Bellamy Grist—this is desecration!" cried Editha.

"Worn out poet's hearts are no great shakes," said Bellamy with a chuckle. Then he added, "I'm thinking, Editha, that that biography you're writing for me should branch off at the operation and continue with Moko."

Week by week his boyishness grew more trying. It seemed as if he spent all his time, except when he was writing poetry, plotting or executing wild pranks. We were relieved, though we were very anxious about how he should behave, when the Society of American Literateurs invited him to help entertain a great French writer, with a view to confronting their guest with the serious, earnest American spirit in its most perfect expression, and he left us for a fortnight.

I watched the papers anxiously; but plainly he was restraining his mischievous spirit, for the event passed off without a scandal. At the end of a fortnight he came back with the astounding intelligence that he was off to Paris. The old Bellamy Grist had always proclaimed that the true American poet must never weaken his grip on the American spirit by enervating contact with effete Europe. This recantation was a great shock to Editha, and I expect to most of his admirers.

After he had gone we were both happier. It was a rest for us. Then he wrote that he was going to settle down in Paris for a year or two, and asked me to manage his money and remit his income. I agreed thankfully.

But always there loomed ominously ahead the publication of his book of which I had never dared to speak to Editha. I was out when her advance copy of it came, and when I returned I found her in tears. I tried to comfort her; but it was no use; she said sobbing that her father had destroyed forever his splendid success. For the next two days she went about the house mourning. Then came the day of the book's publication and the appearance of the reviews. When I came to breakfast I found her sitting in the midst of a heap of newspapers and magazines. To my surprise she was flushed and smiling and there were tears in her eyes.

"How could I have been so foolish?" she cried. "I missed the true inwardness of my father's book utterly. The High Thinker says that it shows a poetic insight into the cosmic soul unsurpassed in literature. The Cultured American says that he is the greatest allegorist the world has ever known. Of course there are scoffers"—she frowned—"but they are only superficial and blind—souls in whom the mystic meaning of the universe awakens no response. My father's renewal of youth has trebled his great success. He is in truth to-day America's 'noblest soul.'"

I was a little dazed; to hear that the cultured were filling themselves up cheerfully with the sentiments of Moko took me aback.

Editha tore herself away from the tributes to her father's genius, and we began breakfast. She opened some of her letters; and then I was startled by a sudden cry from her. Her face was full of horror and dismay, and she said, "My father is married! Bellamy Grist has married a French woman! He has married that!" and she tossed a photograph across the table to me.

I have never seen a lady of a more Simian type.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK--A ROMANCE OF THE EAST SIDE,
Mary McNeil Fenollosa.